

into the cold of the rest of the house.
yesterday i did what i've been doing
every so often recently: taking two
showers during the course of the day,
one in the morning and one when i come in
from my walk in the afternoon.
a bit excessive, sure, but the heat is so
comforting, especially on my neck,
which of late has been murderously
painful from simply sleeping the wrong way.
talking to my friend al, last night, he
disclosed to me that he has all but
given up attempting sleep on either side
of his body, so much pain is brought on
by doing so. and it struck me, when
he said this, that i cannot do much else
than sleep on my back too.
sleeping on my stomach: this has never
been an option for me. and
sleeping on either side causes pain
in my arms, hands and neck, which
is unfortunate since i like to
curl up in a fetal position
when i'm cold at night.
when haldora came back from morocco
i cannot tell you the level
of amazement i felt when my eyes fell
upon her tan. i could only
stare at it with mouth hanging
open, wondering at a sun which
could bring about such a
transformation. here
the sun crosses the sky shrouded
by clouds, usually undetected,
and when it is detected
it is largely ignored:
a god
without a people.

THE CLAY PIG AND REMEMBERED PRAYERS

i put the clay pig she brought me from morocco
up on the mantelpiece with the other pigs which
have come to me over the years. this new pig
is especially striking, so exquisitely crude
and bold is it. perhaps it is
because i was born in the year of the pig

that all these pigs come to me.
i don't know. from what i hear
the pig is supposed to bring good luck,
and so i guess it is fortunate that i have
as many as i have now. soon
i will be on the wrong side of fifty,
without a penny in the bank, still making
a paltry salary, so, you can plainly
see i'm going to need all the good luck
that these pigs can possibly supply.
i noticed that after h gave me this pig
she became very ill, unable to
get out of bed for days.

she could barely speak, her voice
was so fraught with tiredness. i had to
bring soup to her house, which i
trucked over the bridge which spans
the wide river between us.
and i suggested to her that maybe i should
bring the pig back to her, that
maybe her giving it up to me was just
too much of a blow to her fragile psyche
and thin, vulnerable frame.
after all, she was born in the year
of the pig, just as i was.

but she refused my offer to return
it, while at the same time looking
at me as though i were a wee bit
crazy. but the soup: she loved the soup,
a navy bean and potato concoction,
having been in the works for over
two days. i was considering flavoring it
with a ham bone, just to
give it some badly needed muscle,
which i figured she could use,
but i abandoned this idea, afraid
she might detect the taste of it,
perhaps causing her to be repulsed
by it, such a thoroughly committed
vegetarian i've come to know her
as being. so instead, i just
dunked the clay pig in the pot
a couple of times, and i
mumbled the few remembered parts
of some old, but hopefully
still useful, prayers
from my catholic school
days.